

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

(Case Study)

The Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and a dynamic and energetic group of Youth Opportunity members from the Roxbury team collaborated during the summer of 2001 in a unique community project geared toward educating the team members and the community about environmental health hazards, and then putting their knowledge to practical use to help solve these problems.

The team met with DSNI, a grass-roots neighborhood advocacy organization, to learn about illegal trash dumping and its effects on the Roxbury community. This environmental concern has a long history in Roxbury, and through a better understanding of this topic, the members learned about the background of DSNI, how environmental recklessness has created health problems for area residents, as well as the history of grass-roots politics in the area and how it relates to this environmental problem.

Once the members were educated on these issues, they walked around the neighborhood and passed out fliers to residents regarding an upcoming community meeting that would specifically address illegal dumping in and around Roxbury. The members also chose an overgrown and littered part of town near an elementary school and did a clean-up there. Since they had just learned about the effects that the environment has on the community, the members decided to do a physical service project to help the community and show support for DSNI.

This was a powerful service project on many levels. The youth gained insight into the history of their community, what events have impacted it in the past and what continues to impact it. They learned about different environmental health hazards and how to prevent or help stop them. Many of the youth grew up in Roxbury and didn't know about DSNI or about the neighborhood action that has taken place in the past, and what forms the neighborhood action takes today. These young people also went out in the community educating residents on the issues and how to play a role in making a change in their community, as well as performing a two-day physical service project, showing their support for the community in which they live.

With the help of DSNI, the Roxbury team gained a better understanding of Roxbury and its resources. They also were empowered to feel proud of Roxbury, taking ownership of their community and helping make it a better place to live.